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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION OF THE INDIAN OCEAN AS A ZONE OF PEACE

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 16 December 1993, the General Assembly adopted resolution 48/82, in which the Assembly invited Member States to submit to the Secretary-General, by 31 May 1994, their views on new alternative approaches, including those discussed at the 1993 session of the Ad Hoc Committee, contained in its report to the General Assembly. The Assembly further requested the Secretary-General to submit, by 30 June 1994, a report based on replies from Member States. In pursuance of that request, the Secretary-General, on 31 January 1994, sent a note to the members of the Committee in which he asked them to submit their views.

2. The present document contains replies received from Members to the note as at 29 June 1994. Replies received subsequent to that date will appear as addenda to the present document.

II. REPLIES RECEIVED FROM MEMBER STATES

SRI LANKA

[Original: English]

[25 May 1994]

1. It would be helpful to preface the views of the Government of Sri Lanka with a brief comment on the general course of the development of the Ad Hoc Committee's work since its inception in relation to the changing regional and international political environment and the evolving consensus in the Committee.

2. The initiative to declare the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace was based on the determination of the peoples of the littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean to preserve their independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and to resolve their political, economic and social problems under conditions of peace and tranquillity. The proposal was further based on the conviction that the establishment of a zone of peace in an extensive geographical area in one region would have a beneficial influence on the establishment of permanent universal peace based on equal rights and justice for all in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as, for example, the Treaty of Tlatelolco in Latin America.

3. The proposal as presented in General Assembly resolution 2832 (XXVI) of 16 December 1971 was influenced by the regional and international climate prevailing in the early 1970s, which then portended the extension of great-Power rivalry and the arms race into the Indian Ocean area, posing a serious threat to the maintenance of peace in the area.

4. The Ad Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean was established to realize the goals of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. The Committee's work has been governed by evolving international realities in general and the situation in the Indian Ocean area in particular. In accordance

with paragraph 3 of resolution 2832 (XXVI), littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean met at the United Nations in July 1979 and adopted seven Principles of Agreement for the Implementation of the Declaration. In 1979, consequent to the Meeting of the Littoral and Hinterland States, and on the recommendation of the Ad Hoc Committee, a decision was taken in the General Assembly that a Conference on the Indian Ocean be convened during 1981 at Colombo to implement the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

5. The following year, in 1980, reflecting the growing détente between the nuclear Powers, the United States of America and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Ad Hoc Committee's membership was increased to 45, including all the nuclear Powers. Significantly, the Committee also decided to work on the basis of consensus. Work proceeded accordingly on identifying elements that could eventually be considered at an Indian Ocean Conference.

6. In 1989, the Committee had to revert to voting on its resolutions and some permanent members of the Security Council found it necessary to withdraw from participation in the Committee's work.

7. With the international political environment undergoing rapid and radical changes and as great-Power rivalry is being replaced by a new and welcome phase of confidence, trust and cooperation, favourable opportunities now exist once more for renewed multilateral and regional efforts towards the realization of the goals of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region. It is to be recalled that the 1971 Declaration had expressed the desirability of maintaining conditions of peace and security in the Indian Ocean area "by means other than military alliances" - conditions that seem more realistic in the current context.

8. With the coming into force of the Convention on the Law of the Sea in 1994, the Ad Hoc Committee could also be a forum to consider issues relating to the full exercise of the freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean by all nations which has been central to the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace initiative from its inception.

9. The most recent session of the Ad Hoc Committee in 1993 reflected the new climate underlying its work. Support for General Assembly resolution 48/82, though not unanimous, has been encouraging. New alternative approaches towards the realization of the goals of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region were discussed. These need to be further examined, clarified and developed with the participation of all concerned States.

10. Many positive factors in the evolving global political and security climate could be examined in relation to the Indian Ocean area. In the context of these favourable circumstances, new alternative approaches need to be considered to expand the parameters of confidence and cooperation and to promote peace and security in the Indian Ocean region.

11. Sri Lanka is of the view that action along the following lines would help to advance this process:

(a) In the current climate of international cooperation following the end of the cold war, the participation in the Ad Hoc Committee's work by all the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean would help advance conditions of peace and security in the Indian Ocean region and in general;

(b) A conceptual review of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace exercise could be undertaken;

(c) The Ad Hoc Committee should be developed as a forum in which the permanent members of the Security Council, major maritime users and littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean could discuss proposals and consider measures of regional and international significance relating to the region;

(d) The Ad Hoc Committee could be a forum for confidence building among the littoral and hinterland States and to relate any regional initiatives to global measures;

(e) Such a mutually beneficial dialogue should encompass military as well as non-military aspects of security and provide means for identifying and narrowing differing perceptions;

(f) Economic cooperation, including in respect of resource management, environmental issues, fisheries, shipping, telecommunications and regional mechanisms such as the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) and the Indian Ocean Marine Affairs Cooperation Council (IOMAC), could be developed at the regional and subregional level through collective efforts in the Ad Hoc Committee encompassing the littoral and hinterland States and non-regional States interested in such mutually advantageous collaboration;

(g) The broad concept of an Indian Ocean community has been mooted and could be seriously examined in the context of the Ad Hoc Committee;

(h) Naval cooperation among the littoral and hinterland States and other States pursuing peaceful interests in the region has increased and the Ad Hoc Committee could explore means of furthering such cooperation with the overall intent of developing friendly relations among such States;

(i) With the growing threat internationally and to States of the Indian Ocean area of the illegal trafficking in drugs, concerted efforts could be undertaken in the framework of the Ad Hoc Committee to deal effectively with this threat in accordance with the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances in 1988;

(j) Similarly, cooperation efforts to monitor and limit the related problem of the illegal transfer of arms affecting the security and territorial integrity of States in the region could be mounted following discussions in the Ad Hoc Committee;

(k) The end of apartheid and the establishment of a democratic Government in South Africa ease past security concerns in the southern African region and offer greater opportunities for encouraging enhanced participation and

involvement of the African States in regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean region;

(l) The movement towards peace and stability in the Middle East could be encouraged, given the fact that the Indian Ocean region, in the context of the Ad Hoc Committee, encompasses the natural extensions of the Indian Ocean;

(m) A seminar could be convened in which government representatives, scientists, naval authorities, academics and experts nominated by States could elaborate on the various alternative approaches to cooperation in the Indian Ocean region with a view to making the Ad Hoc Committee's work more productive and effective;

(n) A Conference on the Indian Ocean could be convened following the eventual establishment of a consensus regarding its agenda, participation and timing.

12. The Government of Sri Lanka looks forward to a discussion of these and other new alternative approaches as may be suggested when the Ad Hoc Committee meets at its sessions in 1994.